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Verification Push

The Reagan Administration plans to go beyond national technical means of verification, a euphemism for electronic intelligence, reconnaissance and early warning space-craft, in verification of an arms reduction agreement, if one can be negotiated with the USSR in Geneva. The U. S. has continually raised in the Standing Consultative Commission (SCC) meeting with the Soviet Union encryption violations by the USSR of telemetry data associated with ballistic missile tests. The Soviets have been partially encrypting the data, making it difficult for the U. S. to determine the number of reentry vehicles on a missile, accuracy and missile type. The Soviet position is and has continued to be that the portion of telemetry data not encrypted is sufficient for U. S. verification of compliance with existing arms control agreements. Partial encryption took place again Oct. 26, when a new light-to-medium solid-propellant intercontinental ballistic missile launched from Plesetsk suffered a first-stage failure. Some U. S. officials believe the new missile is a fifth-generation follow-on to the Soviet SS-17 or SS-19, and it may be a mobile booster designed to replace the SS-16.

Polygraph Flap

New policy regarding the use of lie detector tests in the Pentagon does not indicate a desire to clamp down on leakers, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy retired Gen. Richard G. Stilwell told the House last week. Controversy over the proposed change to Defense Dept. use of polygraph machines has caused publication of the regulation in the Federal Register to be delayed. The purpose of the changes is to give greater assurance that Defense employees are not spying for a hostile government, Stilwell said. First, the policy would allow use of lie detectors for classified programs and materials. Secondly, it would require such tests for military personnel assigned to the National Security Agency and employees of the Defense Intelligence Agency in critical intelligence positions. Employees with special clearances should be subject to counterintelligence lie detector tests in order to keep their clearances, he said. Finally, lie detector tests should be available for use of temporary employees needing special access for a short period of time. Defense Dept. general counsel William H. Taft said lie detectors will be an investigative tool, not an evidence gathering machine.

—Washington Staff